

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3781

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 0887

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT AO

SUBJECT: PROBLEM RETURNING REFUGEES IN NORTHERN ANGOLA

1. I TALKED ON JULY 9 WITH THE ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOP OF CARMONA, A PORTUGUESE, ABOUT THE SITUATION OF THE FORMER REFUGEES WHO HAVE RETURNED TO ANGOLA FROM ZAIRE. THEY ARE IN A BAD WAY, SAID THE BISHOP, AND HAVE RECEIVED ALMOST NO HELP FROM THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT. HE CALLED THE LACK OF ASSISTANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT SCANDALOUS.

2. ACCORDING TO THE BISHOP, ABOUT 150,000 REFUGEES HAVE RETURNED, ALMOST ALL AT THEIR OWN INITIATIVE. MOST HAVE FEW SAVINGS AND REQUIRE EXTENSIVE AID UNTIL THEIR FIRST CROPS COME IN. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS PROVIDING FOOD: CORN FLOUR AND DRIED FISH ARE THE CHIEF ITEMS. MANDIOCA, ONE OF THE KEY STAPLES OF THE BACONGO DIET, IS IN SHORT SUPPLY BECAUSE OF A DISEASE THAT HAS HIT THE CURRENT CROP. CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES IS PROVIDING 25,000 DOLLARS A MONTH FOR THE PURCHASE OF FOOD AND OTHER NEEDED ITEMS. THE CHURCH HAS ONE OR TWO TRACTORS THAT IT LOANS OUT AN HOUR AT A TIME TO

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ALLOW THE RETURNEES TO PLOW THEIR FIELDS, BUT THE NEED IS

MUCH GREATER THAN THE ABILITY OF THE CHURCH TO HELP.

3. AFTER THE BACONGO FLED IN THE EARLY SIXTIES, SAID THE BISHOP, THEIR LANDS REMAINED UNUSED, SO THAT WHEN THE REFUGEES COME BACK MOST OF THEM ARE ABLE TO GO RIGHT BACK TO THEIR FORMER PLOTS OR TO STAKE A CLAIM TO LAND IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY. THERE ARE VERY FEW CASES IN WHICH WHITES TOOK OVER ABANDONED LANDS AND WHICH REFUGEES NOW CLAIM. DESPITE THE HARDSHIPS, HE SAID, THE REFUGEES ARE DRAWN BACK BY THE DESIRE TO LIVE WHERE THEY WERE BORN. VERY FEW OF THE RETURNEES HAVE APPLIED FOR JOBS ON COFFEE PLANTATIONS TO REPLACE OVIMBUNDU CONTRACT WORKERS FROM THE SOUTH BECAUSE THEY FEAR THAT UNLESS THEY STAKE AN ADEQUATE CLAIM PLANTING A CROP THEY WILL LOSE THEIR LAND TO OTHERS. HE SAID SOME OF THE RETURNEES ARE STEALING IN ORDER TO GET FOOD, BUT DID NOT INDICATE THE PROBLEM IS ONE OF MAJOR PROPORTIONS. THE FLIGHT OF CIVIL SERVANTS FROM THE INTERIOR HAS MADE IT DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH A SEMBLANCE OF ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER. HE DID NOT DIRECTLY CRITICIZE THE FNLA, BUT INTIMATED IT COULD DO A MUCH BETTER JOB THAN IT HAS UP TO NOW IN ITS HUMAN RELATIONS.

4. THE BISHOP SAID THAT ALMOST ALL THE OVIMBUNDUS ARE GONE AND THAT THERE IS LITTLE PROSPECT OF THE GROWERS HARVESTING THEIR COFFEE.
KILLORAN

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